



February 18, 2011

Debby Barrett, Chair
Senate Natural Resources Committee
State Capitol
Helena MT 59620

Dear Chairman Barrett and members of the Committee:

The Missoula City-County Health Department opposes SB 306 because it would promote open pit mines that would damage land and water resources in our County. This bill would lead to a proliferation of open pit mining in the Blackfoot River, Clark Fork, Rock Creek and Ninemile Creek watersheds. Open pit mines up to five acres in size are not required to post reclamation bonds, but cause water pollution from acid mine drainage including contamination with heavy metals and arsenic. This pollution will affect surface and groundwater in our County, impacting human health and aquatic life.

Many areas of Missoula County contain low grade ore deposits that would be mined if this bill passes, and the ore would be shipped to cyanide leach mines such as Golden Sunlight, Kendall or Montana Tunnels.

This bill is in direct conflict with two voter passed initiatives banning open pit cyanide leach mining in Montana. These initiatives were strongly supported by the voters of Missoula County.

Sincerely,

Peter Nielsen
Environmental Health Supervisor

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FEBRUARY 21 2011
DATE 2/18/11
BILL NO. SB 306

Testimony on SB 306

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

My name is Casey Perkins and I am here today representing Montana Audubon, which has 3800 members in 9 chapters around the state.

Audubon opposes SB 306 because Montana Audubon's board voted unanimously to endorse I-137. This initiative was passed in 1998 by the citizens after a rigorous public debate. The Legislature has already voted to uphold the initiative at least twice, and since there have been no new developments since then that make the technology any better, we do not believe there is sufficient reason to revisit the issue. We urge you to vote no on this bill and continue to protect Montana's environment as our citizens have requested.

Thank you.